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ABSTRACT

Schools cannot succeed without collaboration with parents and the community. Defining community education as active community involvement in the education of children, this booklet describes aspects of community education. Community education, the booklet points out, can take place at physical locations such as formal school buildings, which lie dormant much of the year, and recreation centers. The booklet argues that community members must be involved in designing a community education program that meets a large variety of needs, by providing diverse educational services, by promoting interagency cooperation and public-private partnerships, and by providing community improvement and citizen involvement. Possible components of a community education program are suggested: (1) remedial and enrichment activities; (2) noncredit enrichment classes for adults; (3) sports, craft, and other recreation activities for adults and children; (4) preschool and after-school child care; (5) programs serving senior citizens and other special populations; (6) career education; (7) volunteer programs; (8) literacy programs; (9) family education programs; and (10) community newsletters. Sources of possible funding for community education are also listed, including: (1) school or city budgets; (2) municipal or county agencies; (3) fees paid by program participants; (4) federal and state programs; and (5) grants from corporations and foundations. Two important aspects of programs, ongoing assessment and public relations, are noted. Descriptions of various existing community education programs conclude the booklet. (JW)

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By Larry E. Decker & Mary Richardson Boo
Foreword by P. Michael Timpane

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An Introduction to Community Education

By
Larry E. Decker & Mary Richardson Boo

Foreword by
P. Michael Timpane

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Foreword

Finding a New Fit for the Family, Community, and School

Our schools need new ways to think about and foster parental and community involvement in education.

To be sure, some schools and communities have dealt successfully with weakening support for the schools through innovative arrangements for school-family collaboration and various configurations of school-based community services. But, at bottom, little fundamental change has occurred over the past 25 years in educators' thinking about the roles of school, family, and community.

We hold fast, and not without good reason, to schools' and teachers' hard-won autonomy. We see only supporting roles for parents and communities in the education of children—expanded roles, perhaps, but supporting all the same. We are ambivalent about taking on more community responsibilities, especially when societal problems are growing, and community organizations—churches, youth organizations, settlement houses, and so forth—are in even more difficulty than schools.

Most of all, we yearn for the good old days of the 1950s and '60s, when newly educated and affluent parents in burgeoning communities presented us with both the baby boom and unparalleled financial support.

We must put that nostalgic vision behind us. Like most "good old days," it was not as great as our memory suggests—ask poor or minority people how they remember it. And it will never happen again; too much sweeping change has occurred in families, schools, and communities even to imagine it.

We must develop a new perspective, and it must rest on three challenging propositions:

- schools cannot succeed nowadays (or, to put it more strongly, schools will fail) without the collaboration of parents and communities;

- families need unprecedentedly strong support to become and remain functional; and
- communities must take charge of all the developmental needs of their children.

It will be difficult and painful to assent fully to these propositions. Building up families and communities will ultimately strengthen education, to be sure, but the process may be tumultuous to the extent that it will involve parents and community leaders claiming prerogatives and assuming new roles in realms of school activity that educators now solely exercise.

It will mean, for example, collaborative curricula and pedagogical decisions affecting both schools and individual students. It may mean giving up ownership of facilities or at least sharing them more widely. It also may mean more limited autonomy for school districts and boards. It will involve discarding our long-held stereotypical views of how families function, and learning how to take today's families on their own, rather than the school's, terms.

This challenge must call forth bravery, above all. School leadership must be at the head of this parade. No one else can speak with as much legitimacy and effect in every community in the land. Few other can, frankly, stand the heat; attitudes and behaviors of long standing will not change overnight; a new sense of trust and common purpose will not bloom immediately.

But the outcome will be more than worth it—a community crusade for children with schools that are redesigned and reinvigorated.

P. Michael Timpane
Vice President and Senior Scholar
Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
Princeton, New Jersey

INTRODUCTION

Supporters of public education have reasons to be gloomy these days.

CARE packages, which for 50 years have been filled with food, seeds, and tools for the poor and hungry abroad, are being distributed in some of our own inner-city neighborhoods. These American CARE packages are filled with books, cassette tapes, and instructional materials on how to be a responsible parent.

The Governor of New York wants to abolish the oldest continuous education policy body in the nation, the New York State Board of Regents, which has had such distinguished members as Alexander Hamilton, DeWitt Clinton, and Kenneth Clark. The New York Times says the Governor is right, because the Board has failed to lead or to accept responsibility for failing school districts.

Battles over school spending have broken out in affluent suburbs across the country as taxpayers assert that "throwing money at schools" has not been shown to improve them.

In Michigan, a new method of financing schools without total reliance on the local property tax is causing confusion and unhappiness, and local school districts are worrying about losing their autonomy to the state, which now controls most of the money. In Michigan and in other states, the number of "charter" schools—publicly funded but free of most state regulation—is growing.

Ohio State University, alarmed by the number of young teachers who quit the profession after a short time, is revamping its teacher preparation program, adding a mandatory year-long internship.

In Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania, teachers won a court injunction forbidding the school board to proceed with its plan to contract out school operations to a private consulting firm. So many school districts are considering contracting with for-profit companies, an education professor at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota publishes a newsletter on the subject.

A proposition approved overwhelmingly by California voters would require teachers and other professionals to turn in children they suspect of being illegal aliens; implementation has been delayed by a court challenge.

David Hornbeck, an education consultant who earned the nickname "Dr. Fix-It" by helping 20 states revamp their school systems, said there is not a school district in the U. S. in which "a huge proportion of students is achieving. He hopes to change that as the new superintendent of Philadelphia's public schools."

Thousands of parents have simply given up on public schools, enrolling their children in private schools or teaching them at home.

One of the largest studies ever undertaken of the nation's elementary schools has concluded that, although their problems are less severe than those of most junior and senior high schools, many of our K-6 schools are also deeply troubled. Seriously isolated from their communities, they are doing an inadequate job of teaching reading and language arts. They use class time poorly, and they fail to promote core civic virtues. The study, by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, is pessimistic about complicated "reform-of-the-month" approaches and recommends that elementary schools establish "exceptionally strong ties" to parents and neighborhood leaders.

For many years, community educators—who are philosophically committed to "exceptionally strong ties" between schools and communities—worked hard to persuade other professional educators that parent and community involvement is a good thing to be fostered, not an annoyance to be "handled," or a problem to be solved. Now, almost everyone agrees that too little, rather than too much, family and community involvement is the problem that must be addressed if schools are to have any measure of success in their principal goal of improving the academic performance of all students.

In community education, "back to basics" means getting back to active community involvement in raising and educating all of our children.

Communities That Educate

Community education extends the concept of public education beyond the traditional K-12 program known as "schooling." It is not limited by traditional school schedules and roles. It focuses on community needs. Do the community's children need health and nutrition services? Do their families need support from community agencies? Do adults in the community need literacy training or new job skills? Community education uses all available community resources—including the resources of the school—to meet the needs of community members.

At the heart of community education is a simple idea: schools are not just places to teach children, but centers for the entire community because learning is lifelong.

Although communities vary greatly, every community has resources that can be used to meet the community's needs and improve community life. Comprehensive community education programs provide opportunities for people to work together to improve both their own lives and the life of their community. In the process of taking leadership roles and working together, community members discover the diverse talents of residents and develop mutual respect and a greater understanding and acceptance of differences. A community advisory council characterized by openness and cooperation can transform a traditional school and a troubled community.

Genuine community schools, available for use beyond the traditional K-12 program, provide academic, extracurricular, recreation, health, social service, and workforce-preparation programs for people of all ages. Community schools involve a broad range of community residents, public and private organizations, and local, state, and federal agencies. They offer both learning and enrichment opportunities for residents of all ages, educational backgrounds, and socioeconomic levels, including those who have special needs. Community schools become places where people gather to learn, to enjoy themselves, and to become involved in community problem solving.

Community education activities may also be held in recreation centers, libraries, churches, factories, businesses, and other public and private facilities.

Community education invites community members to be both teachers and learners. Facilities and resources are more effectively used, giving taxpayers a greater yield on their investment.

Schools: Isolated and Unused

The little red schoolhouse of the past was a multipurpose building. Socials, musicales, spelling bees, games, bazaars, festivals, meetings, and other activities drew people of all ages to the school. Residents viewed the schoolhouse as their own, a comfortable and convenient place to gather.

Urbanization, superhighways, school consolidations, and a more transient society have changed both our communities and our schools. Today, parents of school-age children represent a much smaller percentage of the adult population than they did a generation ago. Since most schools offer nothing to adults without children, it should not be surprising that many adults are unenthusiastic about supporting public education with their tax money. The schoolhouse, no longer the heart of the community, has lost its place in the hearts of community residents.

Many of today's school buildings are isolated little islands within their communities, used at less than a third of their potential, operating six or seven hours a day, five days a week, nine months a year, while their maintenance, debt service, and other costs continue year-round.

Schools as Community Centers

Why not use schools as community centers, full-time, year-round? Roofs continue to deteriorate, paint fades, equipment depreciates, and grass grows whether or not the building is in use. Learning is not an activity that occurs only between September and June, and only for five- to eighteen-year-olds. Schools can be centers of learning for whole families—for community members of all ages—inspiring loyalty, respect, and support.

Why should a community make full use of its school facilities?

- School buildings are located in most neighborhoods and are easy to reach.
- Schools are owned by the public and represent a large public investment.
- Schools have good resources and professional staffs.
- Traditional school hours leave plenty of time for other uses.

Use of Schools: Some Comparisons

Traditional School
Serves ages 5-18
Open 9 months a year
6-7 hours a day
5 days a week

Community School
Serves all ages
Open 12 months a year
12-18 hours a day
7 days a week

Meeting Community Needs

In the growing, spending America of the 1960s and '70s, some of the responsibility for meeting local education needs was shifted to federal and state governments. In some communities, an unfortunate by-product was decreased local effort to solve community problems. In the '80s and '90s, decreased federal support for education, coupled with expensive state mandates, has created serious economic challenges for many local school districts.

At the same time, many community problems have become more complicated and intractable. The growing number of dual-income and single-parent households has created greater demand for day care, early childhood programs, and extended-day services for school-age children. Underemployment, unemployment, academic failure, teen pregnancy, violence, illiteracy, crime, homelessness, environmental degradation, substance abuse, AIDS, and vandalism pose enormous challenges to our communities.

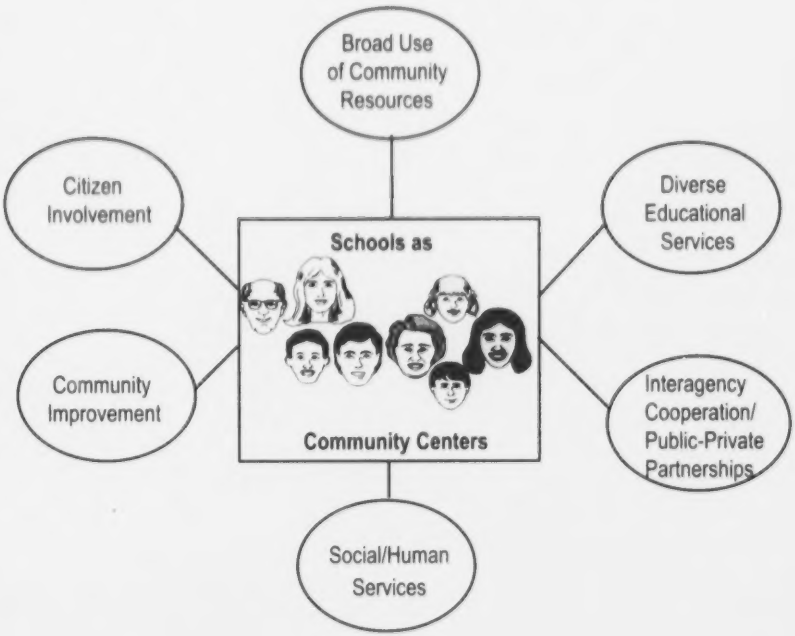
In response, schools in some communities have been transformed into places where community problems can be discussed and solutions explored. Local resources are being identified and tapped to meet local needs, and people are working together to improve life in their communities.

What Is Needed

Before a community can begin to change a traditional school system into a community education system:

- Community policy makers (school and non-school, elected and non-elected) must endorse the basic concept of community education.
- Community leaders and residents must support community education.
- Professional educators must support the idea that schools should serve the total community and must be willing to have community members involved in the schools in a variety of ways.
- A process must be established for involving community representatives in the identification of community needs and the mobilizing of community resources to meet those needs.

From a problem-solving viewpoint, a school can be a support center for a whole network of agencies and institutions committed to addressing community needs and expanding learning opportunities for all community members. Using **schools as community centers** is a cost-effective, practical way to use one of a community's largest investments, its school buildings.



Goals of Community Education

By providing **diverse educational services,** community education helps meet the lifelong learning needs and wishes of community residents, and the skill needs of local businesses. Child care services help parents who lack access to private child care services. By tapping the abundant expertise that exists in any community, community education helps bring the concept of "everyone learns, everyone teaches" closer to reality.

By promoting **interagency cooperation and public-private partnerships,** community education helps communities reduce duplication of effort and increase overall effectiveness. Businesses and private agencies may provide services not affordable in a tax-supported budget. And schools, in cooperation with other community agencies, may address community problems that adversely affect the community's business environment and quality of life.

Through **community improvement** efforts, members of the community may become involved in litter control, recycling, beautification, and improved education and recreation services, making the community more attractive to both current and prospective residents and businesses.

Through **citizen involvement,** the process of community problem solving is moved closer to the people who understand the problems best and are most likely to identify effective solutions.

When a broad range of **community resources** is used for learning, the central role of the community in the process of educating the citizenry is acknowledged. Young people learn from, and with, community elders, and, in turn, teach them. Schools become places where learning and living meet.

Components of Community Education

Community education is a way for people to improve their lives and their communities through learning and collaboration. It provides opportunities for community members, schools, businesses, and other organizations to become partners in addressing educational and community needs. Community education is most easily recognized in the community school, a facility that is open beyond the traditional school day for the purpose of providing academic, recreation, health, social service, and work-preparation programs for people of all ages.

Community education has three basic components:

Lifelong Learning

- Based on the principle that learning continues throughout life.
- Providing formal and informal learning opportunities.
- Offering programs and services for all community members, often in an intergenerational setting.

Community Involvement

- Promoting a sense of civic responsibility.
- Providing leadership opportunities for community members.
- Including diverse populations in all aspects of community life.
- Encouraging democratic procedures in local decision making.

Efficient Use of Resources

- Using the school's and the community's physical, financial, and human resources to address the community's needs.
- Reducing duplication of services by promoting collaborative responses.

Principles of Community Education

Community education offers local residents and community agencies and institutions the opportunity to become active partners in addressing community concerns. It is based on the following principles:

Self-determination. Local people have a right and a responsibility to be involved in determining community needs and identifying community resources that can be used to address those needs.

Self-help. People are best served when their capacity to help themselves is acknowledged and developed. When people assume responsibility for their own well-being, they build independence and become part of the solution.

Leadership development. The training of local leaders in such skills as problem solving, decision making, and group process is essential for ongoing self-help and improvement efforts.

Institutional responsiveness. Public institutions exist to serve the public and are obligated to develop programs and services that address continuously changing public needs and interests.

Integrated delivery of services. Organizations and agencies that operate for the public good can meet their own goals and better serve the public by collaborating with organizations and agencies with similar goals.

Decentralization. Services, programs, and other community involvement opportunities that are close to where people live have the greatest potential for high levels of public participation. Whenever possible, these activities should be available in locations with easy public access.

Rewards of Community Education

Communities that formally adopt community education acquire tools for addressing many difficult problems. These communities exhibit the following characteristics:

- Someone is assigned an official leadership role in coordinating community and school efforts.
- Volunteers help deliver community services.
- Businesses work in partnership with schools to improve student learning and to expand economic development.
- Agencies and institutions cooperate to improve services to the community.
- Public school facilities are used by community members of all ages.
- Parents are involved in their children's education and in school governance.
- Community resources, material and human, are used to enrich the schools' programs.
- Educational alternatives are available for students with special needs and talents.
- Lifelong learning opportunities are available for learners of all ages, backgrounds, and needs.
- Large numbers of citizens participate in efforts to solve community problems.
- Schools and community agencies become more responsive to parents and other community members.
- Schools have a better learning climate and student achievement improves.
- Schools and other public agencies enjoy broad-based community support.

Getting Started

First and foremost, there must be an individual or group willing to act as catalyst, enabler, broker, negotiator, and instigator to talk about community education and create opportunities for people to talk to each other about it. Talking is the way to start.

Think about the times and places that people gather and discuss community problems: over lunch or coffee, in carpools, in checkout lines, at child care centers, in shops, at council meetings, in teachers' lounges, at church fellowship meetings, at PTA/O meetings, in bars, laundries, and gas stations. These are places to start talking, to suggest a new approach to community problems. Tell people about the opportunities that could be opened up if the spirit of the little red schoolhouse could be recaptured through a modern community education initiative.

Involve as many people as possible. Everyone must recognize his or her responsibility for improving the community. The program will need the support of policy makers, professional educators, and human service providers. A firm commitment from community leaders and educators will assure community members that their efforts will not be in vain.

No single formula can be applied to all communities, but here is one possible scenario:

- City and county councils, school boards, boards of trustees for social service organizations, and other groups approve resolutions in support of community education and form a coalition dedicated to working together to make it happen.
- Since the program will require extensive use of school facilities, the school board adopts specific policies that permit year-round and extended-day use of schools.
- Key administrators within each agency—school superintendents, agency directors, county administrators, and city managers—promulgate these resolutions and policies throughout their agencies.

- The school system appoints someone to a systemwide leadership position (usually called community education coordinator), with additional full-time or part-time staffing at each designated community school or other community education site. The role of these individuals is clearly defined and accepted by the community and its policy makers. In smaller communities, the community education coordinator might also oversee the school system's public relations program and parent and community involvement activities.
- Each designated community education site has its own advisory group.
- One of the first actions of the newly appointed leaders, in conjunction with advisory groups, is to collect information from community members about community problems and ideas for solving them.

SAMPLE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, there is growing public insistence that all levels of government be more responsive to the needs and desires of community members; and

WHEREAS, the amount of tax revenue and other resources available to meet public demand for facilities, programs, and services is limited; and

WHEREAS, our community has facilities, equipment, and staff that could be organized for the purpose of providing education, recreation, cultural, and service programs for all residents; and

WHEREAS, no cohesive strategy for the development and coordinated use of these community resources has yet been established; and

WHEREAS, great social and economic benefit could be derived from cooperative facility use and program development for the benefit of all citizens through a comprehensive community education program; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that this board endorses community education as an educational process for serving all age groups in the community and for using the total resources of the community to develop education, social, and recreation programs and services for all community residents who desire them.

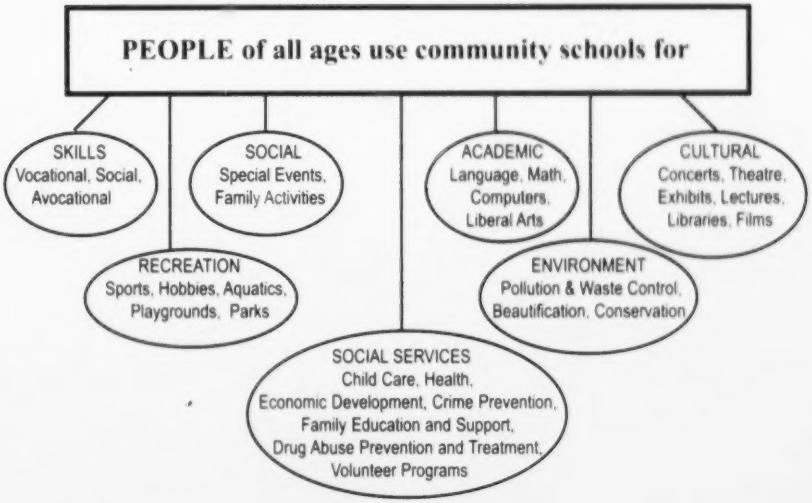
Program Components

As a community education program is set up, the community should make an effort to tailor its component parts to local needs and resources. Following are some common components of existing community education programs:

- Remedial and enrichment activities for children outside of traditional school hours.
- Noncredit general interest and cultural enrichment classes and activities for adults.
- Recreation, craft, and sports activities for adults and children.
- Preschool and after-school child care programs.
- Programs for senior citizens and other special populations.
- Career and technical education in partnership with local employers.
- Intergenerational programs.
- Community service and other volunteer programs for young people and adults.
- Family support and family education programs.
- Literacy programs.
- Adult education and vocational classes.
- Programs that address interpersonal relationships.
- Health and human services programs.
- Community newsletters and other forms of communication.
- Programs that address specific community problems.

If broad citizen participation is organized, the program design will accurately reflect community needs and concerns. Citizen input, combined with the support of community leaders and the coordination of agency activities, will usually yield a comprehensive range of programs and services.

Community Education Is People Helping People


PEOPLE of all ages use community schools for
SKILLS
Vocational, Social, Avocational
SOCIAL
Special Events, Family Activities
ACADEMIC
Language, Math, Computers, Liberal Arts
CULTURAL
Concerts, Theatre, Exhibits, Lectures, Libraries, Films
RECREATION
Sports, Hobbies, Aquatics, Playgrounds, Parks
ENVIRONMENT
Pollution & Waste Control, Beautification, Conservation
SOCIAL SERVICES
Child Care, Health, Economic Development, Crime Prevention, Family Education and Support, Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment, Volunteer Programs

Funding Options

Although volunteerism is key to the success of any community education effort, it is important to budget for professional community education staff. Local commitment is the most reliable, and the most permanent, base for community education funding. Local funding assures local citizens control over spending decisions. Funding sources may include:

- School and/or city budgets.
- Joint funding with municipal or county agencies.
- Fees paid by program participants.
- Contributions from businesses and individual donors.
- Funding for specific programs from federal and state governments.
- Grants from corporations and foundations.

Ongoing Assessment

Effective community education programs are sensitive to a community's changing needs. To make sure a program is responsive, leaders must engage in ongoing assessment and evaluation. Three important questions should be asked over and over: What is the program accomplishing? Does it respond to community needs? Can it be made more responsive? In addition to assessing the program on a regular basis, advisory groups, task forces, and special committees should reassess community needs at least once a year. Surveys, interviews, community forums, and other techniques may be used to stay abreast of changing needs.

Assessment provides current information about problems that have been addressed and emerging problems that need attention. Based on the information collected, decisions can be made about dropping selected program components, adding new ones, and modifying others to make them more effective.

Public Relations

Once a community education program begins to address community problems and expand local learning opportunities, community members must be kept informed. Public relations is a two-way process: it both disseminates and collects information. Through a variety of media—newsletters, press releases, advertising, and published articles—news about what is happening in the community education program can be shared with the community. Key community leaders and groups can provide feedback about the effectiveness of the community education program.

Public relations activities are more likely to be successful if a trained staff member oversees them. An effective public relations program:

- Is planned, systematic, and ongoing.

- Accommodates trends or conditions that may affect the achievement of objectives.
- Includes a system for listening and responding to people both inside and outside the program.
- Is open and honest.

Communities in Action

Long-range plans for expanding community education have been developed in more than 30 states. In many communities across America, community education is already addressing community issues and concerns.

- **Birmingham, Alabama.** The community education program, including adult education, community schools, dropout prevention efforts, and family education and support, receives two-thirds of its funding from the city council and one-third from the board of education. The community schools program uses the National Issues Forum concept of talking through issues and sharing decision making. Through partnerships with the private sector, colleges, United Way agencies, churches, and organizations, classes and activities are provided for all ages. Collaborative efforts address such community issues as homelessness, illiteracy, poverty, crime, teen parenting, substance abuse, academic failure, and unemployment. Linkage between the schools and human service agencies makes counseling, health services, and employment training available at school sites. Every community school has a representative advisory council that is linked to a citywide council. These volunteers participate in needs identification, goal setting, resource development, and evaluation.

St. Louis Park, Minnesota. The mission of St. Louis Park Public Schools is to be "the cornerstone of lifelong learning" for the community. More than 43,000 learners are involved in a wide variety of programs: family services (early childhood family education, parenting classes, preschool and school-age child care); youth services (youth development, conflict management, youth enrichment, volunteers); and adult services (adult literacy, senior citizen programming, adult enrichment, and adults with disabilities). Six school buildings, four community centers, and other community locations are used. Relationships with the K-12 program are strong and positive. The Youth Community Education Office is located at the junior high, as is the Preschool Childcare Program, which operates from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. year-round. Adult volunteers serve as career and personal mentors to students and often provide enrichment activities in the classroom. College credit courses, computer training, and adult enrichment classes are available in the evening.

Ankeny, Iowa. Ankeny undertakes a comprehensive, multi-agency needs assessment every five years. Within each five-year cycle, the results of data collection are processed by all participating agencies; the Ankeny Citizens Planning Conference uses a charrette model for planning. Voluntary commitments from citizens and agencies have established numerous partnerships and community services. Strong citizen involvement and interagency cooperation have made it possible to initiate many self-supporting, community-based solutions to identified community needs. Among the community problems addressed are juvenile crime, substance abuse, and school-age child care. The community education program has established a family resource center, a joint city-school bond referendum measure, senior citizen transportation, decentralization of human services, an economic development program, and community beautification.

- **Tony, Wisconsin.** The Flambeau School District is embarking on a major school reform initiative. The goal of "The Responsive Schools Project" is to develop an ongoing school improvement process that includes participation by the entire school community (parents, students, staff, and community members) aimed at: (1) setting clear and rigorous intellectual and social goals for all students, choosing meaningful assessment methods, designing new curricula, and measuring results; (2) designing a program of school-linked human services that reflects the needs and priorities of the students and families it serves; (3) promoting school, home, and community cultures that support all aspects of children's learning and development—academic, social, physical, and emotional; (4) determining project priorities and monitoring progress; and (5) influencing local and state public policies related to educational restructuring and community renewal.

- **Eureka, Missouri.** The Rockwood School District involves more than 100,000 participants in 27 schools. The community education program includes before- and after-school child care, preschool activities, intergenerational tutoring, recreational activities for children and youth, adult basic education, adult special-interest classes, and a senior center that operates five days a week throughout the year. Summer activities are available for all ages. A Partners in Education program integrates community resources into the K-12 curriculum. One aim of the program is to provide students with experiential learning opportunities and a better understanding of careers.

- **Greece, New York.** Greece's Parent Support Program provides monthly parent programs and several mini-conferences a year. All programs are free and open to the public; they are also videotaped and aired on local cable television, and made available on loan at the public library, the teacher center, the community learning center, and the district media library.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNITIES ARE LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Why are some communities reasonably effective in meeting their problems while others, not all that different, are prone to default?

Effective communities appear to be different, not because of economic or demographic or regional factors, but because they are simply better educated as a community. They are good at educating the whole community in the community's business.

An effective community appears to have more than just facts; it knows what the facts mean in the lives of the diverse people who make up the community. What an effective community knows is not just personal knowledge; it is shared knowledge.

One of the most important things that leadership organizations can do to increase the effectiveness of their community is to develop leadership that is truly—and powerfully—public.

David Mathews, President
Charles F. Kettering Foundation

Boise, Idaho. Community education has been a part of the Boise schools for more than two decades. City council meetings are held in neighborhood schools. Interagency cooperation involving 20 agencies has led to many new programs and services. The generosity and dedication of hundreds of volunteer instructors have made community education classes affordable, allowing the participation of entire families and promoting among district residents of all ages a feeling that the schools belong to them.

Gloucester County, Virginia. The Community Education Department functions under the structure of the county government with a strong partnership with the public school system. Department staff coordinate community use of school facilities and provide more than 80 hours of weekly supervision at six community school sites. Community education staff also coordinate such school-related programs as after-school enrichment for students; volunteers and community partnerships; and identification and use of community resources. The Community Education Department sponsors the Gloucester Resource Council, a network of human service agencies and community organizations that plan together and coordinate services to minimize duplication and maximize use of resources. Interagency coordination and collaboration have led to the development of a full-service school pilot project at one elementary school. A quarterly newsletter, volunteer bank, computerized community resource guide, youth commission, community beautification and recycling programs, and literacy/GED services are other program components.

Flint, Michigan. Recent restructuring of Flint's 60-year-old community education program led to the creation of a Community Education Agent position and renewed focus on four key areas: health, parent involvement, academic support, and neighborhood development and school safety. The program emphasizes a strong team approach and willing-

ness to cooperate with other community agencies and organizations. New interagency programs deal directly with teen pregnancy, parenting skills, HIV education, and neighborhood improvement. A major feature of the program is its thorough integration into the mission and goals of the public school system.

- **Arlington Heights, Illinois.** Over a 10-year period, community education has evolved from a continuing education program serving less than 9,000 adults to a comprehensive community-wide program serving more than 60,000 participants of all ages. More than 30 special projects serve cultural, social, technical, business, health, and education interests and needs, and more than 70 ongoing community-business-education partnerships are flourishing.

- **Bayonne, New Jersey.** Community education activities offered year-round to residents of all ages are the result of the Bayonne Community Education Council's community decision-making process. Three elementary schools and a high school have opened gymnasiums, swimming pool, track, ice arena, computer labs, and other facilities to the community on a year-round basis. Programs include Adult High School, a state-certified evening high school diploma program; general adult education; a variety of youth enrichment activities; summer day camp for preschool and elementary students; and child care before and after school on school days.

- **Salem, Oregon.** The 50 schools of the Salem-Keizer School District serve 32,000 students and a regional community of 250,000 people. The district's mission statement begins, "In partnership with the community...." The major components of the community education program reflect the district's commitment: community education, volunteer services, business-education partnerships, citizen involve-

ment, school-to-work transition, professional-technical education, economic development, and administration of the federal Perkins grant. Innovative efforts include arranging for teacher internships at area businesses; implementing a gender equity career conference for middle school girls; providing before- and after-school child care at Chapter 1 schools; and serving free lunches to qualified children during school vacations.

Building for the Future

Developing a lasting community education program takes time and the ongoing effort of committed people. It takes time to gain endorsement of the community education concept by community policy makers and education leaders. It takes a concerted effort to gain the support of community leaders and residents. And it takes dedicated attention to many details to establish a process for involving community members in the identification of community needs and the mobilization of community resources to meet those needs.

But the rewards are clearly worth the time and effort. Community education works:

- It involves parents and other community members in efforts to improve academic achievement and school climate.
- It provides places and programs in which community members can educate themselves.
- It develops public knowledge about the diverse interests and interrelationships that make up the community.
- It provides a setting and a process for community members to meet and talk through issues and work together to try to solve problems.
- It discovers and nurtures the public leadership needed to sustain a learning community.

For More Information

National, state, and international community education resource centers offer information, technical assistance, and training in community education. For more information, contact one of the following agencies:

National Community Education Association
3929 Old Lee Highway, Suite 91A
Fairfax, VA 22030-2401
703-359-8973
Fax 703-359-0972

The following publications are available from the National Community Education Association. They deal with the role of community education and community schools in developing a systematic approach to restructuring schools, turning them into facilitating units dedicated to building communities in which learning can happen.

- *Teacher's Manual for Parent and Community Involvement* by Larry E. Decker, Gloria A. Gregg, and Virginia A. Decker, 1995.
- *School Community Centers: Guidelines for Interagency Planners* by Joseph Ringers, Jr., and Larry E. Decker, 1995.
- *Home-School-Community Relations Manual* by Larry E. Decker and Associates, 1994.
- *Rebuilding the Partnership for Public Education* by Larry Kilbourne, Larry E. Decker, and Valerie A. Romney, 1994.
- *Reforming Public Schools Through Community Education* by Jack D. Minzey and Clyde E. LeTarte, 1994.
- *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement* by Anne T. Henderson and Nancy Berla, 1994.
- *Educational Restructuring and the Community Education Process* by Larry E. Decker and Valerie A. Romney, 1992.

National Center for Community Education
1017 Avon Street
Flint, MI 48503
810-238-0463
Fax 810-238-9211

The National Center for Community Education sponsors short-term workshops, other training events, and dialogues that address a broad range of topics in the community education field. Training is usually held in Flint, but off-site locations can be arranged.

International Community Education Association
Lyng Hall, Blackberry Lane
Coventry CV2 3JS
England
011-44-0203-638-670
Fax 011-44-0203-681-161

The International Community Education Association is a membership organization that provides publications and services and sponsors world-wide conferences and special projects.

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
1200 Mott Foundation Building
Flint, MI 48502-1851
810-238-5651
Fax 810-766-1753

Publications available from the Mott Foundation include:

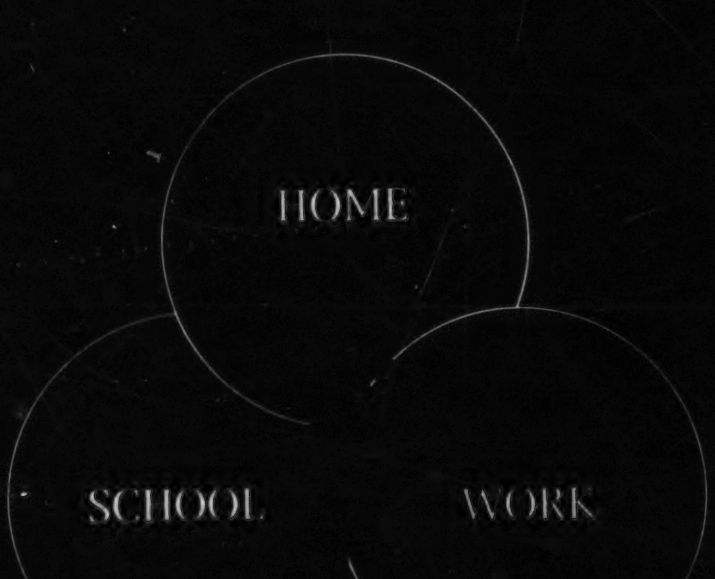
- *1995 Guide to Community Education Resources.*
- *Joining Forces: Communities and Schools Working Together for a Change*, Special Report, 1994.
- *Community Education: A Vision, A Task, A Hope* by William S. White, 1990.

About the Authors

Larry E. Decker has recently been named the Charles Stewart Mott Professor, an Eminent Scholar Chair in Community Education, at Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton. For over two decades he was director of the Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education and professor of educational leadership at the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education. He earned his Ph.D. in higher education and administration at Michigan State University, East Lansing.

He has been a leading spokesperson for the community education/community school movement. He is the author of numerous publications that address the relationship of home, school, and community in creating and strengthening learning communities; and the subject of educational reform.

Mary Richardson Boo, a longtime advocate of community education and community schools, was the director of communications for the National Community Education Association for ten years. Now retired, she continues to edit and write on the subjects of community involvement and lifelong learning.



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